

Journal of The American Institute of
ARCHITECTS



J. L. G. GARNIER

November, 1951

Early Days of York & Sawyer

Excavations at Gourna, 2900 A. D.

What Buildings to See

The Thoughts of Others

Architects and Surety Bonds

Stock House Plans in Seattle

An English Visitor Looks Us Over

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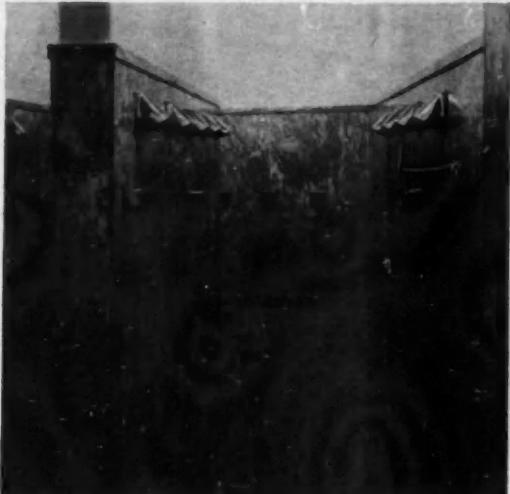
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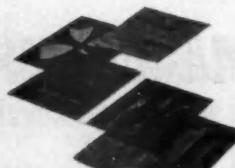


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Early Days of York & Sawyer

By the late Philip Sawyer, F.A.I.A.

Copyright, 1951, by Muriel York

One of the most interesting books in the architectural field that has appeared for a long time is one that the profession generally will never see. It is a privately printed work called "Edward Palmer York: Personal Reminiscences by His Friend and Partner, Philip Sawyer." In its pages are revealed much of the unique flavor which characterized a highly successful practice of the first quarter of this century, spiced with the humor which, to his own friends, was inseparable from Philip Sawyer's outlook upon the world and his fellow men.

Through the generosity of Mrs. Edward Palmer York, who had the book printed for her children, we are permitted to reprint excerpts from the text on our plea that the profession as a whole should share in the enjoyment of these reminiscences.

"Did Ned ever tell you the fantastic story of how we broke into practice? It was so incredible to me at the time, being my first glimpse of Yorkie's intangible method of handling a problem, that I've never forgotten it, nor have I known anyone else who could go so far by thought alone. I didn't quite believe it at the time, and although he has been doing the same thing ever since, I have not yet lost my sense of amusement."

"He told me once," replied Muriel, "that he had selected you as a partner since you had the drive to compensate for his shyness and

the willingness to meet people whom he was inclined to dodge."

"That," I said, "is a rationalization made long after the fact for domestic consumption. The thing, as it occurred, was no louder but much funnier.

"In the spring of 1898," I said, "I found myself occupying the next alcove to your Ned on the north front of 160 Fifth Avenue, the third McKim, Mead & White office in which we had worked together. We rarely spoke to each other, since there lay between us a fundamental incomprehension. *Your man had been born an architect.* To him drawings were as they

are legally defined, 'instruments of service,' mere means to an end, and his end was to turn over a satisfactory building, well designed, well constructed, finished ahead of the time schedule.

"I was a draftsman. I would have confined myself to drawing, etching, and painting, if I could have afforded it. I had compromised on architecture as the next best thing, and my interest was in rounding out the building on paper to the last detail. What happened to the drawings afterward didn't interest me so much. Sometimes I never saw the results of my conscientious but slavish efforts.

"And so as nothing happened in Yorkie's alcove, from which he was usually absent; as he never made a drawing himself, having them prepared by a group of men who always seemed glad to work for him; and as he rarely held a pencil, unless he picked one up to poise idly as his boss, Stanford White, rushed by, *I didn't appreciate the usefulness of one whom I never caught in the act of working.* I imagine that he, if he ever looked on my side of the low partition, felt a natural superiority and perhaps contempt for one who, with his nose down, pushed a pencil assiduously,

producing numberless drawings in a vacuum.

"One late Friday afternoon that spring, Yorkie came into my alcove. He stood for a moment in a visible state of unhappy indecision, and then asked if he might look at some competition drawings which I had made for a Plainfield, New Jersey, High School. I couldn't imagine what he wanted them for and I didn't interrupt myself. 'They're under the table on the floor,' I said, 'you can probably find them.'

"Presently, he came up with a dirty package and asked if he might take it in his alcove to look over, I said, 'Certainly,' too busy to question his object.

"The previous winter I had exhibited these drawings at the Architectural League show. They represented a tight, compact plan on which I had spent a lot of time, but they didn't get the award.

"Presently Yorkie came back. 'Would you be willing to let me use these drawings in a competition and if we should win, to go into it with me fifty-fifty?'

"'What's it for?' I asked.

"'Rockefeller Recitation Hall at Vassar College. Mr. Rockefeller has given President Taylor a hundred thousand dollars to build it. Doctor Taylor has invited me

as one of six competitors, and I think your drawings will fit.' "

" 'May I see the program?' I asked.

" 'Oh, there's no program,' he replied. 'We were just told to come up, talk to the professors, and gather their requirements.'

" 'Let me see the requirements.'

" He hesitated, 'I haven't been up there.'

" 'How long since you were invited?' I asked.

" 'About three months ago.'

" 'When does the thing go in?'

" 'It ought to be mailed tonight,' he said, 'the submission is tomorrow before noon.'

" 'What have you done about it in the last three months?' I asked.

" 'Thought about it,' said York. 'I have concluded that the school you showed at the League will fill the bill and can be built for the price.'

" I looked at Yorkie with amazement. Probably it was the first time I had ever tried to size him up. I didn't know how characteristic of him the whole thing was. He had been invited three months before in a limited competition for an important building—for you must read now for a hundred thousand dollars about three hundred thousand, and the unit job was so much

smaller in the 'nineties. He had been told to gather his own information, and he hadn't been near the place. He hadn't made a pencil mark. But he had thought, and there had come to his mind a tight, compact classroom building with its lowest story sunk to the sill level to economize in height, its two amphitheaters superimposed in the rear, its classrooms each ideally lighted. He had remembered that it was well planned and couldn't be packed tighter, and he had judged it to fit the price. He told me later that he had not seen the professors because their requirements would inevitably tot up to something that couldn't be paid for. As to his waiting till the last minute, I appreciated at once how difficult it had been for him to come to me, an unsympathetic stranger.

" I told him carelessly that he was welcome to the drawings, and he asked me if I would print a new title to be pasted in the panel at the bottom of each sheet, but I, only two years married, was spending my week ends at a fisherman's cottage on the beach at Huntington, Long Island. I said I was leaving in an hour and he would have to get someone else.

" It was the next Friday afternoon—everything happened on Fri-

day on that job—that he came into my alcove a second time, and laid a single typewritten sheet before me. Doctor Taylor wrote that the plans fitted their requirements admirably. They were just what he wanted, but he thought that the elevations and perspective looked more like a high school for a country town than a college building. I thought the Doctor highly perspicacious.

"Would you make another perspective?" Yorkie asked.

"I would not, for I was going down to Huntington on an early train that afternoon. I showed Yorkie in a collection of rotogravures, which we called the 'English Book,' the sort of thing to do and suggested that he get 'Swarty' to make him a water-color perspective, which that facile draftsman could do in the next three hours. You see I didn't even take enough stock in the thing to waste time on it.

"Again, during the week I saw nothing of Yorkie, but Friday he looked around the end of my alcove partition to say, without enthusiasm, that Doctor Taylor had asked him to come to Vassar.

"Again, Huntington Beach washed my mind clean of work, and it was not until noon Monday that on my way to lunch through

the outer office I came on Yorkie. At sight of him I recalled our joint venture. He was sitting at a table figuring something on a scratch pad. Even his shoulders, seen from the rear, were unhappy.

"What did they do to you at Vassar?" I asked. He rolled his eyes up at me like a sick sheep, and seemed incapable of speech. 'Evidently,' I said, 'they didn't give you the job.' And then reluctantly in a voice which hardly reached me, he exhaled: '*That's just what they did.*'

"You see, Muriel, he had never done a job alone, although I think he hadn't asked Stanford White for anything but opportunity. Yet there had been always the moral support of a great office to fall back upon, and he must have felt it, though he had not used it. A hundred thousand dollars was a fortune, and he found himself stuck with a partner about whom he knew little and whom, I think, he liked less. He was momentarily doped by this joke of the gods, and I rather imagine that if he had waked that morning to find that the Poughkeepsie trip had been a nightmare, it would have been a relief to him.

"But it was no dream; we were launched in a practice, which now

after thirty years is still growing. I didn't appreciate then how characteristic the whole thing was of your Ned. He hadn't moved, he hadn't drawn a line, *he had merely thought*. He had won the award. As he has continued to do ever since, but no one has ever caught him at it.

"Sometimes when the office was boiling, and I could hardly cover the drafting-tables and keep up with the committee meetings, I was exasperated to see Yorkie in the big corner room, his desk clear of papers, smoking a peaceful pipe and reading *Benvenuto Cellini*. If I paused in his doorway, my face probably expressing what I felt, he would remark placidly, 'I can always tell, Sawyer, when you think that you are busy because it annoys you that I am not. You think that it's because I am lazy, but it isn't that at all. It's a matter of principle. No one has ever seen me busy and no one ever will. I regard it as wasteful to compete with people so efficient, for example, as yourself. I never do anything that I can get anyone else to do better for me, and I am a very modest man.'"

During the Vassar job we kept no books. Early in the game York had told me that one of his sisters

had received a scholarship from Vassar and that, while he was under no obligation to return it, he would like to do so. He said, "There's no reason why you should share in this Sawyer, unless you wish to, but I would appreciate it if you would let me credit the college with the fifteen hundred dollars out of the first check that we receive." I agreed, of course, since, as York later said to me, "You have never found out what money is about, Sawyer, and you never will."



We had no books. We had no bookkeeping. We each carried a little red vest-pocket notebook. When we received a check, I totted up what I paid out and York stated what he had spent. We subtracted these two amounts from the total of the college remittance, divided what was left, cashed the check, and each of us put his share in his own bank account. I don't know what idea York had of our future; my plans didn't go beyond the Vassar job until a second recitation hall came in. Here was more work which obviously belonged to us both, and Yorkie thought we ought to have an agreement. I had written one to cover the first build-

ing and to expire at the conclusion of the work or on the first of the year following its termination. When we did open a firm account, I remember but one provision—we agreed that neither of us would draw checks to ourselves. A personal withdrawal had to be signed by the other partner. Later this was amended to allow either of us to sign a check to himself if he at the same time deposited an equal amount to the private account of the other partner. For a few years this procedure continued, and we signed a new agreement each first of January, Yorkie asking, "Don't you ever do anything permanently? Can't we make an agreement that we can break once a year instead of one that has to be renewed so often?"

But presently we got too busy

to bother with it, and we drifted along without an agreement until 1910 when we became aware that our two best men, Louis Ayres and L. M. Franklin, having done, on their own, a chemical laboratory at Rutgers College, were likely to leave us, and we took them into the firm. In order to do this we made a basic agreement to which they could be admitted.

I can't remember just when we took a room in the north top floor of the Presbyterian Building, which occupies the south side of the block next to the office which McKim then had at 160 Fifth Avenue and on the site of their previous location at 1 West 20th Street. York and I were, in fact, in the same place that we had been in before, but about ten stories higher up in the air.

The Architectural League Exhibitions

"**A**GAIN THIS FALL, winter and spring, The Architectural League of New York will hold a series of exhibitions: landscape architecture, mural painting, architectural works, design and craftsmanship in native industrial arts, sculpture. The material exhibited is limited to work executed since

1941. One does not have to be a member of The League to exhibit.

It is already too late for participation in the exhibitions of sculpture and architectural works.

Following the practice of last year, the exhibitions are conducted in two stages: 1, a preliminary submission of photographs, and 2, the

exhibition of accepted submissions in accordance with the space allotted by the committee. The exhibitors on whom awards are conferred for the monthly exhibits in their arts will be invited to prepare a comprehensive showing of their

work in a final exhibition at the time of the A.I.A. Convention in New York in June.

A circular of information may be had by addressing The League at 115 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

The Thoughts of Others

By Ralph Walker, F.A.I.A.

THESE CLEANINGS from the readings of the last several months point up to me, in definite relation, ideas concerning education and its goals. They form an article completely constructed of other men's beliefs, each clearly acknowledged, but arranged by me in such a fashion as to give continuity. Some of the authors of these quotations may not agree with all the words contained in the thoughts of their neighbors, but it is evident that in most cases the stream of belief follows a consistent pattern, breaking sharply only in one incomprehensible instance. Over the air, the other evening, heard through the subconscious—but insistent in its remembrance—came this supposed motto of the U. S. Public Health Service, which makes sense in a world of scientific values, and espe-

cially to architects whose clients are numerous and so varied in their wants as to be boundless: "With no preconceived ideas we proceed to the next project."

"See with practiced eye
And, seeing, don't deny."

(*The Spur*—Fredericksburg,
Va., May, 1951)

"It is true that the aim of education is development of individuals to the utmost of their potentialities. But this statement in isolation leaves unanswered the question as to what is the measure of development. A society of free individuals in which all, through their own work, contribute to the liberation and enrichment of the lives of others, is the only environment in which any individual can really

grow normally to his full stature."
(John Dewey: "The Ends of Education")

"Vocational education conceived as job training represents the greatest threat to democratic education in our time. It is a threat to democracy because it tends to make the job-trained individual conscious only of his technological responsibilities but not of his social and moral responsibilities. He becomes a specialist in 'means' but indifferent to 'ends' which are considered the province of another specialist. The main concern is with 'getting a job' and after that with 'doing a job' no matter what political direction and moral implications of the job are. Social programs are judged simply by whether they promise to provide the jobs for which the technician is trained. If a Democratic community can supply the opportunity for work, well and good; if it can't, and a totalitarian party or government offers the opportunity why not?"

(Sidney Hook: "Education of Modern Man")

"Man's characteristic pattern of growth forces him to constant activity and is revealed in the con-

tinued emergencies of new specific purposes with new situations."

(Hadley Cantril: "Understanding Man's Social Behavior")

"From the beginning there has been something irreplaceable in philosophy. Through all the changes in human circumstances and the tasks of practical life, through all the progress of the sciences, all the development of the categories and methods of thought, it is forever concerned with apprehending the one eternal truth under new conditions, with new methods and perhaps with greater possibilities of clarity."

(Karl Jaspers: "The Perennial Scope of Philosophy")

"It is a hindrance to the free movement to be lodged in one point of space rather than another, or in one point of time: that is a physical necessity which intelligence endeavors to discount since it cannot be eluded. Seen under the form of eternity, all ages are equally past and equally future; and it is impossible to take quite seriously the tastes and ambitions of our contemporaries. Everything gently impels us to view human affairs scientifically, realistically, bio-

logically, as events that arise, with all spiritual overtones, in the realm of matter.

"Still a man cannot sit above the clouds and have no prejudices. That would be to have no heart, and therefore no understanding for the glories and the tragedies that he talked about."

(George Santayana: "Dominations and Powers")

"Knowledge of the world and what is possible in it, though it may discourage some vices, will not solve for us the question of what is our good. For what the world can offer, when tried, may seem to us vanity. There is therefore another sphere, that of potential goods, which each man may evoke according to the warmth and richness of his imagination; and if he has any integrity or moral strength he will easily discern where his chosen treasure lies. Whether it is attainable in the world or not will not shake his allegiance: it is based on a native bent in his soul without which he would cease to be himself."

(George Santayana: *Ibid*)

"All the phenomena of external nature with all the materials which history and science have treasured

up for the use of the past, are but the mere instruments to shadow forth the fervors of a restless spirit at last conscious of its own powers, and expanding with conceptions of the boundless and the infinite."

(James Marsh: *North American Review*, July, 1822)

"Science is being continually rebuilt. It is an organic structure of which parts decay and are replaced. The dogma of today is the folly of tomorrow and the objective reality of concepts in scientific theories waxes and wanes. To take a few examples, the doctrine that 'nature abhors a vacuum' was at one time a serious scientific dogma which had to be forcibly destroyed in the interests of scientific progress. The dogma that 'parallel lines never meet' had to be wrestled with and discarded as a statement of physical fact. The dogma that there is a unique and definite 'time' for any occurrence was discarded in our own century by Einstein.

"Stick then to the rotten egg as a symbol of reality—"

(John L. Synge: "Science, Sense and Nonsense," p. 55)

"But of course, no art exists primarily for the satisfaction of the

mind alone. It is the heart, or rather the whole being, moral, intellectual and physical, to which it and music (sic) more than any other has the duty of giving voice and expression."

(Paul Claudel: "The Eye Listens," p. 211)

"What we are witnessing today is something more terrible than the collapse of a civilization, although that too is involved. It is the collapse of all absolute moral values, the end of man as a moral being. Nothing, it can be safely said, is good or bad except by reference to some standard outside man's control. When the standard by which man judges his own conduct is only the standard which is set by his own wishes, all judgments of moral value are without meaning. It is simply a question of competing and conflicting desires whose gratification, if it can be achieved, brings not fulfillment but frustration."

(Richard Law: "Return from Utopia")

"Man had required formidable tools for refashioning his life before he had given the least thought to the question of what sort of life it would be well to fashion."

(G. M. Trevelyan: "English Social History")

"And indeed I have often deserved the reproach of not stating quite clearly what I wanted and of not defining in detail rules of conduct which might have given hope of saving what we feel to be in danger today: a culture slowly and painfully acquired throughout centuries, which belongs to a common heritage and seems to have ceased to be of value today. New values have replaced those which formerly allowed us to commune together, which provided us with a reason for living and for sacrificing ourselves for them. I believe that, if we let ourselves be stripped of that past, we shall experience a forever irreparable loss, all the more tragic since the new generations will not even be aware of their impoverishment."

(Andre Gide: "A Letter from Andre Gide," *Columbia Review*, January 22, 1951)

"The brain of man, the nature of his culture, and the role of that culture in that civilization gave him for the first time the immense power, unique in the history of the organic world, so far as we know, of choosing the direction of his own social evolution and of guiding it toward those goals. No living creature, so far as we know,

has ever had that immense opportunity before—nor been confronted with so great a responsibility."

(Caryl P. Haskins: "Of Societies and Men")

"It is the individual who steadily advances through the evolution of human societies over the periods of time that span the birth and death of many civilizations. The terms in which that advance is conceived, moreover, are individual terms—the growth of mental powers, of social capabilities, of spiritual qualities of individual men. The criteria we utilize to measure the advance of civilization refer primarily, not to man as a social animal, but to the dignity and the worthiness and the inviolability of the individual."

(Caryl P. Haskins: *Ibid*)

"Error is the more fatal because all men pursue a single truth; their mistake is not that they pursue a false truth, but that they do not pursue another."

(*Pensées de Pascal*: No. 618)

"Gropius is proud of the fact that it is difficult to tell the work of one of his pupils from that of another—a difficulty that he in fact rather exaggerates. (For the work

of Paul Rudolph, for example, differs a great deal from that of the members of what might be called the Boston Suburban School.) But what is this anonymity that the Chairman of the Harvard Department of Architecture admires in his pupils' work but a common style? It is not the 'Gropius' or the 'Bauhaus' style, moreover, but merely an important part of the broader International Style, as that is practised by the third generation of modern architects in the North Eastern United States."

(Russell Hitchcock: *Architectural Record*, August, 1951)

"En de gals sot up a monstrus gigglement."

(Uncle Remus)

"No man can be a good teacher unless he has feelings of warm affection towards his pupils and a genuine desire to impart to them what he himself believes of value. This is not the attitude of the propagandist. To the propagandist his pupils are potential soldiers in an army. They are to serve purposes that lie outside their own lives, not in the sense in which every generous purpose transcends self, but in the sense of ministering

to unjust privilege or to despotic power. The propagandist does not desire that his pupils should survey the world and freely choose a purpose which to them appears of value. He desires, like a topiarian artist, that their growth be trained and twisted to suit the gardener's purpose."

(Bertrand Russell: "Unpopular Essays")

"Every system should allow loopholes and exceptions, for if it does not it will in the end crush all that is best in man."

(Bertrand Russell: *Ibid*)

"Worshipers of efficiency would like to have each man move in a social orbit meted out to him from his childhood and to perform a function to which he is bound as the serf was bound to the clod. Within the American social picture it is shameful to have these yearnings; and accordingly, many of those who are most attached to the orderly state of permanently allotted functions would be ashamed to admit this publicly. They are only in a position to display their clear preferences through their actions. Yet these actions stand

out distinctly enough. The businessman who separates himself from his employees by a shield of 'yes men,' or the head of a big laboratory who assigns each of his subordinates to a particular problem and begrudges him the degree of thinking for himself which is necessary to move beyond this problem and perceive its relevance, both show that the Democracy to which they pay their respects is not really the order in which they would prefer to live. The regularly ordered state of preassigned functions towards which they gravitate is the state of ants."

(Norbert Wiener: "The Human Use of Human Beings," p. 60)

"Is it not the chief disgrace in the world not to be a unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear; but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, of the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically as the north, or the south?"

(Emerson: *The American Scholar*, August 31, 1837)



What Buildings To See

More and more frequently The Octagon staff hears a puzzling request: Architects from abroad, visiting this country, ask what ten buildings, erected since World War II, should be visited in the search for outstanding examples of what U. S. A. architects are doing. To share the responsibility of answering this \$64 question we shall print, from month to month, the opinions of Institute members whose observations may range between state-wide and nation-wide limits. Your own considered recommendations will be welcome. Last month First Vice President Wischmeyer and Eero Saarinen entered their respective answers, covering a wide geographical range. This month Paul Thiry, F.A.I.A. of Seattle, and Professor Carroll L. V. Meeks of Yale are heard.

Paul Thiry, F.A.I.A.
Seattle, Wash.

1. Johnson Wax Co. buildings, Racine, Wisc.

Frank Lloyd Wright

2. Taliesin West, Maricopa County, Ariz.

Frank Lloyd Wright

3. Maimonides Health Center, San Francisco, Calif.

Eric Mendelsohn

4. United Nations Secretariat, New York, N. Y.

Wallace K. Harrison, et al.

(Wonder if one could draw from this pile with its slim legs the analogy of two worlds, one facing East, the other West? Before all the glass gets broken one might

well hope they will meet in the corridor.)

5. Corning Glass Center, Corning, N. Y.

Harrison, Abramovitz & Abbe

6. Caribe Hilton, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Torro, Ferrer & Torregrossa

7. Philip Johnson residence, New Canaan, Conn.

Philip Johnson

8. Michael Heller residence, Miami, Fla.

Igor Polevitzky

9. Wayfarer's Chapel, Palos Verdes, Calif.

Lloyd Wright

10. Albert Frey residence, Palm Springs, Calif.

Albert Frey

Reasons for picking these? Because each is exciting and each opens an avenue of new thought.

Carroll L. V. Meeks

Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

I would suggest certain areas of special interest.

In Cambridge the newer M.I.T. and Harvard buildings, with the houses at Lincoln and Snake Hill and nearby schools and shopping centers and the apartments adjoining M.I.T. on the river.

In New Canaan the numerous houses by Breuer, Johnson and Noyes.

In New York the U.N. Building, the housing groups on the East River and Fresh Meadows, Long Island, by Voorhees, Walker, Foley & Smith; also the Idlewild Airport and the new bus terminal (not that it is particularly admir-

able but rather so typical of some of our missed opportunities).

In Chicago, the work of Mies van der Rohe, both educational and residential, and Park Forest, Ill., by Loebl, Schlossman & Bennett, with Elbert Peets consulting.

The San Francisco area, which however should be included in an extensive itinerary.

Since most Europeans are interested in the roots of the American development, they would like to see Oak Park and be guided to the surviving buildings by Maybeck and Greene and Wright in California, which would not involve any great detour.

I am convinced from my own travel experience that one should go to two or three centers and then see the significant buildings of the area of all periods rather than dart about looking for special individual buildings. This leads to a more balanced impression as well as being more pleasurable and efficient.

Architects and Surety Bonds

By William Stanley Parker, F.A.I.A.

An address to the National Association of Surety Bond Producers,
March 21, 1950

YOU HAVE ASKED ME to address myself to the question "Why don't more architects suggest and

recommend corporate bonds covering contracts and the bonded competition system?" This I will do

but my remarks will constitute merely my own personal opinion with which other architects and you may disagree.

Times have changed a good deal since 1914, in the practice of the profession of architecture as well as in the Surety Bond field. Let me try to give you what I believe was the general attitude of mind of architects thirty-five years ago. The architect looked upon himself as the guide, counsellor and friend of his client. He believed that a satisfied client was an asset, and he strove in every way he could to protect the owners' interests. He felt there were several ways in which this could, with greatest likelihood, be achieved.

The design should be, of course, sound and economical, in line with his client's financial requirements, and the specifications should call for good quality materials and processes. Those were within his own province and control, barring occasional demands by his client that he might not approve, and barring a critical conflict between the client's purse and his desires. Those are the two elements that the architect must always strive to bring into an equation, an effort which in recent years has created many architectural headaches.

But in 1914 we were accustomed to a considerable degree of business stability since shattered by two world wars and a world depression. And conditions in the field have changed as well as in the architect's office. The architect then was conscious of a marked difference between private and public contracts. In public work there was open competitive bidding, while in private work the architect and owner agreed on a limited list of selected contractors from whom bids would be invited. The owner was under no duress to accept the lowest bid, except as limited finances might control him. All the bidders invited were generally known by the architect to be reputable and competent, although occasionally the client might insist on inviting a bidder who was not so favorably considered by the architect.

The architect issued certificates for payment and was in a position to see that the contractor was not overpaid, and the 15% retained was available to protect the client in case of any trouble on the job due to defective work or other default of the contractor. If therefore, the client was an individual, as was generally the case, neither the architect nor the client felt any need to buy protection from a

surety company. And the losses that doubtless occurred in occasional instances were so small compared to the total business that their calculated risk was a pretty reasonable one.

In dealing with committees or trustees the situation was different, and the fullest protection of the funds they were administering was right and proper, and I suspect that a large majority of bonds issued in those days represented operations of that type.

Now, in those days, which were relatively early days in the history of corporate sureties, the architect looked on a bond as something that was necessary to protect a public job against the deficiencies of a low bidder selected on a price basis. The bidder might be from another state, completely unknown; perhaps a contractor bidding on his first job with no experience rating available. The statute required the acceptance of the lowest responsible bid, but the principal evidence of responsibility was the bidder's ability to get the required bond. And architects in those days were unaware of any contractor who couldn't get a bond from some surety company. A known instance of a contractor who had just failed on one public job, promptly

figuring another with assurance of a bond if he was low bidder, was confirming evidence.

This procedure relieved the public official from any responsibility to determine the character and ability of the low bidder, and frequently resulted in unsound low bids, too low to permit carrying out the specifications completely and resulting in a minimum grade of materials and workmanship and frequent defaults.

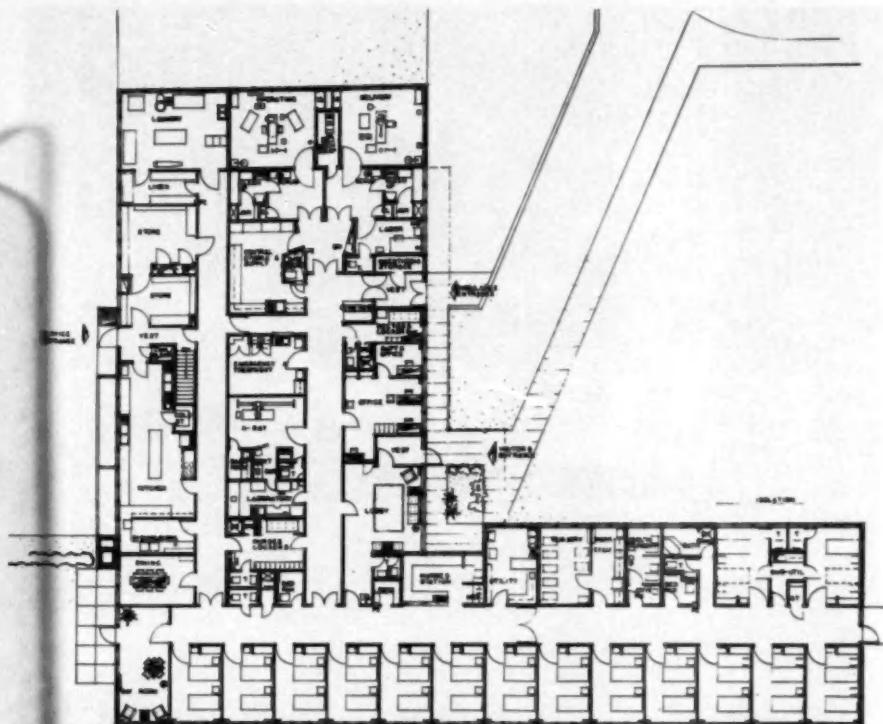
Here arose another factor that did not tend to make architects turn naturally to the use of bonds. It was a general opinion that a bond merely constituted a right to sue the surety to recover on a loss that might have been suffered. The forms of bond generally issued then were drafted by the surety companies, and with considerable skill in providing conditions any one of which was likely to be disregarded by the owner or contractor and thus relieve the surety of responsibility. Therefore, frequently the owner had first to finance the correction of the contractor's failure to perform and then found himself, through a technicality, unable to recover on the bond.

I am writing of conditions and mental attitudes in the early days of this century. I doubt if you



NATIONAL HONOR AWARDS, 1951
HOSPITAL CLASSIFICATION, FIRST HONOR AWARD
CLEARWATER COUNTY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
BAGLEY, MINN.
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will take serious exception to the general picture I have painted. Generalities are always false, and the attitudes I have briefly described were not held doubtless by all architects or by all representatives of the surety companies. Not all surety companies sought to avoid their responsibilities on technicalities, nor to require a suit at law before they would step in to assist the owner when trouble occurred. The architects sought to improve conditions by developing a standard form of bond which created a sort of partnership between the surety and the contractor so that the surety would agree to take over the job and complete it if the contractor fell down.

Over the last twenty years both these trends have developed. I believe it can be said today that the surety associations have adopted the idea that the surety should protect the owner against loss and against the need of extra financing in case of a default, the surety agreeing to step in and take over full responsibility, or after securing bids for completing the work to pay to the owner any excess needed over the amount still retained to conform to the low bid received. That is the most potent development for the cultivation of

interest on the part of private individuals and their architects.

An important element in connection with bonds is the protection of subcontractors, material, men and labor. The form of bond issued by The A.I.A. in 1915 protected the owner and also the subcontractors and labor. In 1940 The Institute adopted a revised form developed by the Surety Association of America which continued to cover both the owner and the payment for labor and material. During the war however, the practice of issuing two bonds, one the Performance Bond and the other the Labor and Material Payment Bond, as used on government contracts, became accepted as a better scheme, as it did away with any conflict of interest between the owner and the other claimants. The Surety Association developed standard forms for these two bonds which were approved by The Institute and issued as an alternative to the 1940 form.

These developments since 1914 have very greatly improved the bonding procedure and should tend, in some degree, to increase the architect's interest in it for the protection of his private clients. Committees and trustees responsible for carrying out building operations

can feel much greater ease of mind with the assurance that their operations will be carried to completion for the contract price and without serious interruption or annoyance. It is proper for such bodies, administering trust funds, to use this established type of protection and they might well be held deficient in care if they failed to do so and suffered a loss.

With the private individual it will remain optional. He will count the cost and appraise the risk involved in dealing with his contractor, and decide whether to take out that sort of insurance or not. The architect, I suspect, will continue to feel that the best protection for his client is a proper price with a contractor of proved ability and standing, and with a reasonable amount retained during at least the first half of the construction period.

In such cases the over-all financial ability of the owner will be an important factor. In many contracts of modest amount the owner may be working on a small financial margin. He may feel it wiser to commit himself at the start for the cost of the bond, say \$200 or \$300, rather than risk a loss of one or two thousand if trouble should occur and the contractor de-

fault. But if he is an optimist, is confident of the ability of his architect and of the standing, financial and otherwise, of his contractor and has reasonable financial reserves, he may see no need for added protection. The generality that a bond will furnish protection will not convince him if, in his particular case, which is probably his first and perhaps his last experience of the kind, he is confident that both his contractor and his architect are going to protect him adequately against trouble.

There are several variables in such cases, and each owner will have to appraise them as they exist for him and his immediate project, and make his decision. The architect's advice may be a factor affecting that decision, and the architect's experience with bonds on jobs that were defaulted, will have an important bearing on that advice. If he has had an unsatisfactory experience he may say to his client, "Look. Suppose the contractor does go broke in the middle of the job; you will have 15% held back on the payments already made; the contractor will have done some work since the last payment and will have probably delivered some materials; add to those factors the amount you would have paid for

the bond and you have every reason to believe that you can finish the work with some other general contractor, carrying through the important subcontractors doing a substantial part of the job, for the unpaid balance. The contractor is apparently sound, he agrees not to take on any large new contract until he has finished your job, so why worry? Save the cost of the bond and have it available for some extra work you may want to add as the job goes along."

In any given case such advice may be sound or unsound, as a calculated risk. It may turn out well or ill, as things ultimately work out. And it may be humanly understandable in the light of the architect's experience with officials of surety companies who have taken a too narrow view of their responsibilities.

A building operation is far from a simple affair. Few operations involved more diverse conditions and human elements. False assumptions, conflicting estimates of cost, wide variations in the character, training and abilities of the many trades and professions involved, the need to combine expert and inexpert labor with varying qualities of material, a client who can be easy-going and understand-

ing of the problems involved or a client who is pernickety and continually at the job giving directions and criticisms. There are many things that may seem more troublesome than the chance that the contractor will fail or default on the job in some important way. And this may be due to the fact that most architects very rarely experience defaults that bring a bond into play. At the moment I can remember only one that I have been involved in. That, doubtless, affects my own attitude of mind. And in that case the surety was not helpful. The architect had to take over a close direction of the work with a lot of added routine regarding payments.

I am therefore heartily in accord with the attitude that has developed among the surety companies as indicated in the two new forms issued by The Institute, and very appreciative of their cooperation in the development of the forms and their readiness to let The Institute publish them as a part of the Standard Documents. This new development will help to give the architect a greater interest in the use of surety bonds for his private clients. To what extent you may find a reflection of this interest in an increase in your business in this

corner of your field of activity is a question. The experience of pollsters in other fields leads me to refrain from any forecast.

I had no intention of inflicting you with a lecture on morals, but as I re-read what I have already presented to you I felt there was an underlying factor that ought to be mentioned. Your business of surety bonds suffers from the same psychological hazard, if it may be so called, that all types of insurance suffer from. In this sense I include, as insurance, various legislative enactments aimed at protecting the public from malfeasance of officials.

It seems to be a rather perverse fact that such attempts at insurance not infrequently result in actions that are quite the opposite of the intent and objective of such protective measures. Let me cite a few examples of what I have in mind.

Towns set up finance committees to prevent excessive public spending and keep appropriations down. That very fact impels every department head to submit as large a budget request as he dares, because he knows that no self-respecting finance committee will give him everything he asks for; so he tends to pad his budget sufficiently so

that he can see it trimmed down somewhat and still have left all that he really needs. I suspect he often gets more under that policy than he would have been willing to accept if he himself had been trusted to state his minimum need.

Every so often a fire insurance policy is the cause of a fire. Every now and then a life insurance policy is the cause of death. Liability policies that protect persons against the results of careless or otherwise incompetent performance undoubtedly, in some instances, tend to reduce the proper degree of care and the quality of performance that would be sought if a failure meant a personal financial hazard. All of these instances are exceptions to the rule. What I am trying to point out is that fallible human nature is involved in all of them and every now and then causes trouble.

So it is with surety bonds, too. I may shock you now in saying that I am inclined to believe that the principal reason for surety bonds is to protect the responsible public officials rather than the public. If a law were passed forbidding corporate surety bonds on public work and requiring that officials awarding contracts should assure themselves of the financial soundness,

competence and ethical standing of all contractors awarded contracts there would have been created one of the strongest possible arguments for highly competent and honest public officials, few of whom could survive a series of defaulted contracts. They would have to create standards of financial stability and make valid investigations to determine the ability of the contractor to carry out his responsibilities in spite of difficulties that might arise. The standard of contractors doing public work would undoubtedly be raised under such conditions, as well as the standard of the awarding officials. The quality of the finished structures, in material and workmanship would probably be improved and the total cost to the public probably not increased.

That is a purely personal opinion. But that is what I was asked to bring to you and all that I pretend to offer in this brief review of a relatively new factor in the field of construction. I do not as-

sert that such a law ought to be passed, still less do I assert that I have any idea that it will be passed. But I do recognize what seems to me as an undesirable result of the operation of surety bonds in public work. I do believe it takes from the awarding official a responsibility that should be his and puts it on the less precise shoulders of a business corporation whose business interest sometimes is at variance with the public interest.

Those problems are yours and their solution seems to me to be your responsibility. It is an understanding of these problems, an awareness of their existence, and of the extent to which they function adversely to what we architects feel to be the best interests of the industry of which we are a part, that leads most architects to seek the protection of their private clients through careful selection of contractors, the award of contracts at fair prices, adequate supervision and proper certification of payments.

Scholarships and Fellowships

THE NEW YORK CHAPTER, A.I.A., is now accepting applications for the 1952 Brunner Scholarship. The grant is for an amount up to \$2,400 for advanced study

in some specialized field of architectural investigation. Applications must be made before November 15. Further information may be had from the New York Chap-

ter, A.I.A., 115 East 40th Street,
New York 16, N.Y.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, through its Department of Landscape Architecture in the Graduate School of Design, offers to those eligible for admission as regular students a scholarship for the next academic year with an income of \$600, equal to the tuition fee. Can-

didates must have received their bachelor's degree, or equivalent, within the past four years; students who are candidates for the degree in June, 1952, are also eligible. Inquiries for further details should be received before December 1 by the Chairman, Department of Landscape Architecture, Robinson Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge 38, Mass.

An English Visitor Looks Us Over

By Peter Newnham

Excerpts from an uninhibited letter written home by an ex-student who came over to see and to work in our architectural offices. Reprinted from the *A. A. Journal* by permission of the Editors.

TO LEAVE SAN FRANCISCO is an expensive business, both for he who leaves and for those remaining. Californians are upset that anyone, having come, should consider going; and so the last week of my eight months there became a feverish give-and-take of celebration.

The train that took me away to Salt Lake City had its roof punctured with double-glazed "Vista-domes," of heat-absorbing glass set in rubber, and one surveyed the mountains (or at night the stars) as from the top of a roofless bus. The cloakrooms underneath were

ostentatiously sanitary—tooth cleaning was dignified by a separate basin, and the lavatory seat sprang up into a sterilising pool of ultraviolet.

The Mormons of Salt Lake City take their revelation from the fifth century, and their mid-nineteenth century "Temple" shuns all the intervening architectural precedents. It is in fact a collection of ritual chambers piled on top of each other, and penned in with a curtain of wall; yet its outside becomes a hideous travesty of a Gothic cathedral; and later Mormons have even fenced it off with Gothic

cast iron. Thus far did they succeed in building outside their architectural heritage. The juxtaposed "Tabernacle"—of the same date—is more different than the trylon was from the perisphere; oval in plan, semi-oval in section, its roof sits on ponderous stone piers, set radially, with over-size windows between. Impressions of an early cotton mill and a Quaker meeting-house mix in the mind, but the nailless wood trusses span one hundred and fifty feet and the interior is so acoustically over-sensitive that you can literally hear a pin drop. The balconies stand free of the walls so that the curved ceiling carries the sound down behind to the seats underneath. Only the unphotographable form of the interior can have prohibited this remarkable building from being more widely illustrated. A vast gilded organ rears up at one end against the curve of the blue ceiling.

Chicago exposed me once more to the abrasive stimulus of commercial America, and though it was dark, I hastened down to Mies van der Rohe's I.I.T. Here amongst the slums, the streets littered with newspaper, I searched for the steel cages. Prowling through them, I came to the architectural depart-

ment and found a few students working late—as one might in Bedford Square. One was drawing bricks: covering a whole imperial sheet with an impeccable brick wall to half-inch scale. It is a typical first-year subject; it teaches you draughtsmanship and, apparently, a knowledge of bricks. The draughtsman soon gave up his stint on hearing my strange accent, and I was whisked off to his digs where we sat on the floor and ate spaghetti by candlelight, under the inquisitive eyes and ears of the others in the house. These included a cross-section of the school, from junior lecturer down to freshman—a very valuable educational experiment.

The next day I was back amongst the cages, searching for some stimulus in their suave emptiness. And, as we use the word, there was practically none; just an exquisite inevitability, softened by the big trees that have been planted, and tinged with romance by the ivy that one of the professors so carefully prunes. The interiors are not so soft, and the black terrazzo floors and the angular hand-rails are built with an engineer-turned perfection for adults who need no pampering. The lecture theaters provide a neutral background (Mies van der Rohe does

not readily flirt with positive color), but I felt some pallid lecturers might benefit from a visual boost. This grand monotony, this extremely personal impersonality, gives any slight deviation the value of a thunderbolt. Thus, an internal courtyard, alive with foliage, that one passes suddenly in a corridor almost overpowers with its charm; and the mere omission of several bays of the steel, where a bearing wall occurs, becomes the focus of an entire elevation. Enough of the buildings have now been built to assess their value in relationship; and this is their real success. Individually, they are "nearly nothing," in aggregate—being all rectilinear—they never become a jumble, but add up to an environment of real stillness. We hear much today of the art of making space flow: sometimes, I guess, I like my space stationary. Stillness certainly is at a premium in Chicago.

The new power station has all the drama that the other buildings shun: its taut steel cage contrasts with the rotundity of the masonry

chimney; the gadgets on its roof and the diagonal pipe at its side hint at the mechanical interior; the rungs up the stack give it scale. And—just at the moment—a rear facade has temporary panels of reddish clay-tile, the exciting clamor of which reveals what Mies loses (or gains) by his rejection of all save cream and black elsewhere.

His concrete-frame flats—Promontory Apartments—are well known for their frank structural expression and rejection of "effect": at night, of course, the great windows bring them alive, and yet the (symmetrical) lounge on the ground floor, with its precisely chiselled space, maintains its stillness under the nose of the traffic outside. Mies' frequent use of symmetry deserves more attention than it has had. The building is bound to startle, just as an undressed model in a shop window startles. One will tend to avert the eyes in case one sees too much. From inside the view through the (armour-plate) glass over the lake will be as breath-taking as a swim before breakfast.

Next month: More Chicago, Taliesin, Racine, Madison, and on to Cambridge.



Favorite Features of
recently elected Fellows:
William Lescaze, F.A.I.A.

AVIATION BUILDING, N. Y.
WORLD'S FAIR 1939

*Journal
of
The AIA*



GROUP OF ENGINEERS AND CONTRACTORS FROM FRANCE
VISITING THE OCTAGON UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF ECA

Front row, l. to r., Pierre Grandjean; Eugene Chalumeau; André Calliez; Leon Kahn. Back row, Edmond Prébin; Guy Grubble (interpreter); Burt L. Knowles, engineer consultant for Associated General Contractors; André Balency; Jean Faury.

Excavations at Gourna, 2900 A.D.

By Milton D. Lowenstein

A thousand or more years hence, archeologists may dig among the ruins of our twentieth-century cities to seek the equivalent of those values and deities which today are sought in ancient mounds and waddis. While looking for the equivalent of Isis and Zeus, and the virtues and abstract qualities man requires as postulates in the mystic process of spiritual growth, the archeologists of the year A.D. 2900 may come upon the evidence of two intangible but renowned figures: the "average man" and the "specialist." If they are as diligent as twentieth-century scholars, they may also find in obscure heaps of mud or sand some evidence of an iconoclast or heretic: buildings by an architect who ignored the current popular myths and substituted other values for the prevailing ones of his era.

THE EXCAVATIONS of the tiny village of Gourna located on the Nile not far from Luxor, are proving to be a more valuable find than those of New York or Cairo. The houses at Gourna appear to be built not as homes for the familiar twentieth-century ubiquitous "average man," but for *individual* families. The structures, belonging to an age which prided itself on the provisions made for the mythical unit, implicitly deny the existence of the "average man."^{*}

There is evidence that the work was carried out under the direction of an "architect" (the designation

of a certain kind of "specialist") but one who demonstrated the creative powers of the all-round human being upon whom we depend for leadership today. Architect Hassan Fathy, with qualifications transcending his so-called "specialist" talents, made Gourna not a model town for the future, but provided a future within which a model people could grow.

The Egyptian Government, in those ancient days, following a practice recognized by other "specialists" (art critics, town-planners, etc.), decided to provide a "settlement" for some Arabs who were

* "Average man" or "average family" is a difficult concept for contemporary minds, which probably cannot conceive even a more elementary unit, such as "average beast" or "average fish." "Average" cannot be made apposite or juxtaposed with "fundamental."

The *fundamental* necessities of life, like a suitable supply of oxygen and shelter, are not for the "average" but for *all*. A "specialist" is the result of stimulating human growth in one direction, usually by curtailing it in other directions.

occupying a portion of the desert on the site of the once famous Tombs of the Kings in the necropolis of Thebes. Architect Hassan Fathy was instructed to design a group of one-, two- and three-room homes for "average families" and, as he was a government "specialist," there was no doubt at first in any official's mind he would apply a standard solution to the problem.

Hassan Fathy studied the budget allowed him and then went to each of the Arab homes in the desert near the proposed site of Gourna. Work had already started on the vast government plans to turn this section of the desert into a great cemetery-museum to which tourist money would be attracted by such ancient names as King Tutankhamen and Queen Nefretiti. Above the deeply buried remains of a vanished glory, the miserable Arabs lived with their scrawny goats and bloated children. They still retained what allowed man to be distinct as an individual in society. Among these minimum requisites of dignity were personal misery which would not be willingly shared with others, and faith in the individual's power to meet a traditionally familiar destiny.

The architect's report to his su-

periors contained some gratuitous recommendations, one of the most unusual of which was that each family had unique housing needs; another item in his report suggested that each family could not be provided for within the limits set by the budget; and finally, that he could interest each family in helping with the building of the houses, thus reducing to a minimum the number of highly paid, skilled workers. He objected strenuously to an over-all housing project of uniform units built of expensive foreign materials like steel and concrete.

After many months of buck-passing by administrators, Hassan Fathy was allowed to have his way. Keeping in mind that the essential purpose of a house is to provide protection for a uniquely composed family group, the architect analyzed each family's problem: the number of rooms required immediately, the number needed in the future, and the most desirable disposition of the functional elements of each house. He also determined the work contributions each family could make to the building operations. He was familiar with the country's traditional structural methods (which his contemporaries had relegated to the domain of archeology and com-

pletely ignored in favor of Western steel and concrete techniques). He had studied not only the techniques of building domes with mud and straw, but the esthetic effects so economically achieved by diffusing the brilliant sunlight of Egypt with gracefully curving domed roofs. So he began by teaching the workers from each family how to make bricks and then to build arches, vaults and domes without centering. These almost lost arts were uncovered by Hassan Fathy's researches into techniques which their forefathers knew for thousands of years. As the native skills improved, the hired, highly paid, expert workers were released. The cost for the principal material and labor had been reduced to an absolute minimum.

Hassan Fathy displayed the qualities suggested by the old Greek saying: "A gentleman should know how to play a flute, but not too well!" and he brought out those same qualities in the people he supervised. The simple doctrine of one *whole* man threatened the ritual of statistics, bureaus and the self-anointed priesthood of the idol called the "average man." The growing enthusiasm of the Arabs as they beheld their own homes

evolving from their own efforts was shared by the architect, but controlled to some extent by him. Among the decisions which he had to make was to refrain from putting running water from a main supply into each building; instead he placed a hydrant near each group of houses. This arrangement required the women to carry the water in the traditional way to the reservoir of glazed pottery located on top of each house directly over the kitchen and bathroom. Hassan Fathy records the observation that as people have to carry their water, they will tend not to waste it. In time, he said, the families would get accustomed to having as much water as they wanted and it could be piped directly to each fixture from the main.

If Hassan Fathy had adhered to the beliefs and policies of his time and used expensive foreign materials to construct standard units for non-existent, mythical categories, the immediate distress of many of the people without shelter would undoubtedly have been relieved—for the time being. However, a trauma would not necessarily have been healed, but merely hidden by an insidiously malignant process which generated

a graver, more complex and lasting pathology than the one it supplanted. Enforcing on a people a common pattern of a "home" in whose design or erection they played no part, would inexorably increase the incidence of tensions between individuals and families, each of whom would strive to augment abnormally any differences upon which the human level of dignity depended.

Repudiating the old gospel of the specialist, Hassan Fathy dealt with psychological and sociological situations by not emphasizing his specialty, but by applying the feelings and inclinations of a warm and philosophical spirit. Like the greatest masters of old, he laid the foundations not only for new homes, but for new-old traditions and for the new kind of life which inevitably accompanies folk-expression, until the richness of a classic art such as we have in our enlightened times is attained.

The architect modestly summarized his position with the ob-

servation that you cannot build *for* the poor, but must build *with* them; any more than a doctor can give a poor man his health, but can only show him how he may possibly win it himself.

There is something very modern, and at the same time, something venerable about Hassan Fathy's optimism. At a time when his contemporaries were locked in introspection over "form" and "function," when the beguiling complexities of a vast variety of exotic materials gave emphasis to a virtuosity which replaced the creative spirit, there "the letter killeth," Hassan Fathy founded his buildings on a single indigenous material and the simple dignity of man. Within the broad scope of his vision he contained the eternal enigma of architecture: as a functioning element of the contemporary social order it satisfies the immediate practical needs of the present; as an *art*, it turns men's thoughts and feelings toward the future and the perfectibility of the human genius.

News from the Educational Field

PRATT INSTITUTE, Brooklyn, announces additions to the staff of its Department of Architecture: John Johansen, to teach Design

Analysis; Sidney Katz, Robert Hays Rosenberg and Raniero Corbelletti, to teach Design; Mrs. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, to teach His-

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tory of Architecture; Douglas Haskell, as visiting lecturer in Theory.

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY has appointed Howard K. Menhinick, recently of TVA, Regents' Professor of City Planning in the School of Architecture.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE COLLEGE announces the following appointments in its School of Design: Hugo Leipziger-Pearce, Professor of Architecture; Eduardo F. Catalano, Associate Professor of Architecture; Roy Gussow, Assistant Professor of Design; Leslie J. Laskey and Louis Tavelli, Instructors in Design; Kenneth McCoy Scott, Instructor in Architecture. Lewis Mumford, who has been Visiting Professor for the past three years, returns to the school for a fourth year. Other visiting lecturers during 1951 and 1952

will be Alden B. Dow, R. Buckminster Fuller, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Pietro Belluschi and Naum Gabo.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, Department of Architecture, announces the appointment of Ambrose M. Richardson as Professor of Architecture. Professor Richardson is a graduate of Illinois who has recently been Chief of Design with the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Chicago. He will have charge of the department's graduate courses in architectural design and will conduct courses in advanced planning techniques and urban housing.

The department also announces the appointment as Instructor in Design of John G. Replinger, recently of the office of L. Morgan Yost.

Calendar

November 14-28: Building Exhibition, Olympia, London. For further details address the Managing Director, 4 Vernon Place, London, W. C. 1.

November 27-28: Symposium on Laboratory Design for Handling Radioactive Materials, sponsored by The A.I.A. and the Atomic Energy Commission, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D. C.

December 11, 12: Meeting of the Executive Committee, Board of

Directors, A.I.A., The Octagon, Washington, D. C.

January 20-24, 1952: 8th Annual Convention and Exposition of the National Association of Home Builders, Stevens and Congress Hotels, Chicago, Ill.

March 3-5, 1952: Meeting of the Board of Directors, A.I.A., The Octagon, Washington, D. C.

June 24-27 1952: 83rd Convention, A.I.A., The Waldorf-Astoria, New York, N. Y.

Gutta *

By H. Daland Chandler, F.A.I.A.

The Architect will never see
A thing as useful as a tree;
Right off the bat his common sense'll
Tell him that minus it, no pencil;
No drawing-board, no rolls of paper
On which, inspired, to cut a caper;
No joists, no roofers, door or floors,
Nor those old standbys, two-by-fours;
Thank God for wood!

And now today

A warning from the NPA,
Stern caveat with nasty jar,
(It's caveat—not caviar!)
Rulings which tell you what you oughter
Not count upon in any quarter;
Copper and steel—or go to jail—
You'll weigh 'em on a letter scale!
New stringencies to CMP,
M-74, 4A, 4C,

All indicate, if I'm correct,
Without a tree, no Architect!

* The title may suggest something of the hazy and romantic tradition of our noble profession: a little drop, not particularly noticeable on the Acropolis, but nevertheless having its part and doing its bit there.

Stock House Plans in Seattle

By Marvin R. Patterson

FOR SIX YEARS, the Washington State Chapter has been carrying on what is really an experiment in the serving of the owner of a low-cost dwelling, who would not ordinarily seek an architect. There

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has been a rather wide difference of opinion as to the wisdom of this experiment, and it has been carried on by the vote of a bare majority of the chapter.

Chapter members are agreed that Seattle is a beautiful site for a city and that architects have a responsibility in attempting to prevent its defacement by the presence of poorly designed houses. This responsibility has been discharged in part by the formation of a Small House Plans Bureau, which the chapter operates in collaboration with the Seattle Chapter of the Master Builders. This answer is stock plans—better stock plans, we like to believe, but still stock plans. These were accumulated through three periodical competitions, each offering \$1,000 in cash prizes (*JOURNAL*, Jan., 1950). Sad to relate, the public has shown a predilection for the designs that have been rendered attractively with trees and pleasant surroundings, but without real discrimination in favor of the house that may be more suited to a particular site. The public has bought 39 sets of prints and specifications for the eight prize houses. This is not all good news, for their authors seem to have considerable difficulty in recognizing them on the street.

Finally, the majority of the chapter shifted a bit to vote that the Small House Plans Bureau be dissolved and a new scheme for rendering such service be worked out.

The committee, after studying the situation, reported that it had sold 531 plans, 32 this year, without special publicity. Architects have been paid \$13,275 for their efforts. The presentation drawings have been published to the amazing extent of 33 million impressions. Whatever the effect on the public taste has been, we may be pleased that each of these impressions has borne the name of the Washington State Chapter, A.I.A., and of at least one architect.

The alternative to continuing the sale of stock plans seems to be to step aside and permit the speculative builder and the public to procure stock plans from other sources.



The committee proposed, therefore, that the Bureau be maintained, with a service improved, if possible, and this report has been accepted by the Chapter.

The end of the experiment is not yet. Perhaps we, or some other chapter, will find the answer.

They Say:

Pietro Belluschi

(*In an address before the Detroit Chapter, A.I.A., April, 1951*)

What is happening to so-called modern architecture? I, for one, believe that it is in the process of shedding some of the programmatic objectivism and academic mannerisms which seemed to be in danger of degenerating, and that it again is developing those sympathetic human qualities which all the best architects of the past possessed in large measure, without either giving up the discoveries and the gains which it has achieved in these last thirty years, nor having to return to the false sentimentalities of the past.

Lewis Mumford

(*In "The Sky Line," The New Yorker, September 22, 1951, continuing his comment on the United Nations Secretariat Building.*)

The engineers concerned estimate that the present orientation of this narrow building, because of exposure to the sun during the summer, puts a load on the cooling system that raises the operating cost two-and-a-half per cent. The human cost is greater; many of the occupants are compelled to

work a good part of the day under artificial light behind their drawn Venetian blinds. Thus it is sadly necessary to remove the view the walls of glass were designed to reveal and to cut off the sunlight they were designed to admit . . . The result of misorienting the Secretariat and using glass so exuberantly is to create a building that functionally is often windowless on all four sides. On this matter, the architectural historian, Professor Henry Russell Hitchcock, seems to me to have said the last word. "The most significant influence of the Secretariat," he recently observed, "will, I imagine, be to end the use of glass walls in skyscrapers—certainly in those with western exposures, unless exterior elements are provided to keep the sun off the glass." In this sense, Sir Joseph Paxton's dream of an all-glass building, which grew out of his experience as a gardener, has been reduced to absurdity in the Secretariat . . . The Secretariat has been presented to the world as a building built about human needs, but that pious profession should bring a blush to the architectural ears of Mr. Pecksniff. Humanly considered, the Secretariat Building is as

obsolete as iron dumbbells . . . At no point in the evolution of the skyscraper was the efficient dispatch of business under conditions that maintained health and working capacity the controlling element in the design. Given a magnificent opportunity to break completely away from the stereotypes of narrow-gauge business standards, the architects of the United Nations Secretariat could do no better than perpetuate an out-

moded form, save for a few structural innovations that merely decrease its usefulness.

Secretary of State, Dean Acheson

(In an address to the World Assembly of Youth, Ithaca, New York, August 13, 1951)

By now it should be clear to all that the path of regimentation can lead only backward—to tyranny, to servitude, to the degradation of man.



Architects Read and Write

Letters from readers—discussion, argumentative, corrective, even vituperative



"I KNEW HIM WHEN"

BY GOLDWIN GOLDSMITH, F.A.I.A., Austin, Tex.

IN HIS DELIGHTFUL ARTICLE, "I Knew H. H. Richardson" in the September JOURNAL, Mr. Welles Bosworth, referring to my article "I Remember McKim, Mead and White" as "very interesting," adds: "I knew each much better, and could paint a broader and more personal picture of them than that." He owes it to us older fellows, and the younger ones as well, to add anything he can to the historical records of these three men.

I could have enlarged on my knowledge of them in my brief

article but I purposely kept it short. I might have told a number of anecdotes about the firm and its men and about the personal contact of a young boy with each of them, but felt that what I wrote was sufficient for my purpose in writing it.

My contact with Mr. White was much more intimate than with the others; my night work in writing his private letters, my odd and interesting errands for him, my introduction as a very unsophisticated boy of 18 or 19 into a side of life of which I had known noth-

ing, would have enabled me to write "a broader and more personal picture" of Mr. White, at least. I did not want to.

There is one incident which might interest Mr. Lawrence White, F.A.I.A. When he was not more than a year old, his father and mother took him to Europe with them. Mr. White detailed me to get certain papers from the office and bring them to the steamer. There were so many friends seeing them off that the excitement proved to be upsetting to the baby and he was bundled into my arms to care for until the steamer was ready to sail. He seemed quite content with me, but after sixty years I would not expect him to recognize me!

I wonder if Mr. Bosworth remembers Royal Cortissoz, then an "office boy" with an ambition to become a journalist. Being a member of a family of journalists (my

father an editorial writer on the *New York Herald* and my mother, brother and step-father all in the same profession), we had many conversations on the subject and I encouraged him in his ambition. The older generation in The A.I.A. know the eminence in the profession and in his other accomplishments to which he rose.

Mr. Bosworth mentioned John Galen Howard, later a member of Howard & Caldwell when my firm, Van Vleck & Goldsmith was in its infancy. My partner worked for them as a cub draftsman after graduation from Columbia where Van Vleck and I became friends. When Mr. Howard took on the University of California development he did me the honor of asking me to replace him in his firm.

Reminiscence is sometimes an old man's privilege but if indulged in too freely he may become a bore, so this is a good time to quit.

THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

BY WALTER E. CHURCH, F.A.I.A., Portland, Ore.

A FEW YEARS AGO a young student was heard to say that the study of architectural history was not only a bore but was completely useless for the modern architect and, moreover, was liable to "contaminate" one's thinking in terms of pure logic and function.

A professor in a well known school of architecture was also heard to express the view that the only excuse for continuing the

course in history in his department was as a "cultural" elective subject, available in the last year where it would do little harm.

Since these attitudes have had rather wide acceptance, it was with great interest that I read Professor Robert Talley's article "The Function of History in the Contemporary Curriculum" in the July 1951 JOURNAL, which points out some very real values to be derived from

the study of this subject, particularly by the contemporary student.

Of course the basic approach used by Talley through analysis of the causes underlying the development of various building types, stressing such factors as social forces, development of structural methods, climatic conditions and availability of materials is not entirely new, as Bannister Fletcher's "History of Architecture on the Comparative Method" utilizes something of the same method. However, Talley's application of this to help the student's development of valid concepts of design on his drawing-board seems a logical and worthwhile extension of the idea.

In the introductory paragraphs of his article, Professor Talley notes that while some exponents of modern architecture say that history is of no value at all to the contemporary architect, others would allow a limited amount of history in guide-book style in order that the architect know something of the heritage of his profession. (A kindly thought at least.) Talley, with tongue showing in cheek, then mentions the sentimental defenders of history on "cultural" grounds and suggests that if such arguments about history prevail, "The subject will just die from plain starvation and its teachers will be the displaced persons of architecture, with the postcard business as their refuge." (I trust the cards will not be of the low type involved in "The Curves of the Borgias" published

in the same issue of the JOURNAL.)

May I suggest that a knowledge of the heritage of his profession, and even a bit of sentiment mixed with his logic, combined with the knowledge of the factors affecting the development of architectural types, might well increase the student's ability to feel as well as think, facilities which great architects, modern as well as ancient, seem to have possessed in full measure.

In most states which have registration laws requiring written examinations, architectural history is one of the included subjects. The State Board of Architects' Examiners in Oregon has lately tried the experiment of putting the emphasis on the factors affecting the development of architectural types rather than on names and dates—on "why," rather than "who" and "when," much as does Talley in his course. The consensus seems to be favorable as being a more fair and more inclusive test of the examinee's general knowledge of the subject, which is, after all, the thing being tested in the comparatively short examination time available. Other benefits which could have accrued from the study of the subject might well appear in such examinations as design and composition—not as copies or derivatives from the traditional, but in sensitivity to those factors which will more clearly distinguish the better contemporary work from that of our engineer friends.

If any architects interested in

the subject have not yet had the pleasure of seeing Professor Tal-

ley's stimulating article, I believe they will find it rewarding reading.

ON LAW

BY JOHN LLOYD WRIGHT, Del Mar, Calif.

"**A**LLEN'S LAW," (page 114, Sept. JOURNAL, viz: "It is not as important to talk to a prospective client as it is to get the p.c. to talk to you") is like "Hooke's Law" in that it does not go quite far enough, for it is good only to a certain limit.

Take "Wright's Law," viz: "It is not as important to get the

prospective client to talk as it is to get the p.c. to write on a memorandum that conveys money to you."

Like Roger Allen, money is always funny.

Unlike "Allen's Law," "Wright's Law," which could be indelicately expressed, "No pay, no say," goes all the way.

OBSERVATIONS ABROAD

BY MILTON D. LOWENSTEIN, London, England

THREE IS a pervasive excitement among the people of London which perhaps would be noticed only by an American. The ordinary "guys" you talk to are soberly aware of the implication of world affairs and their very resignation to the holocaust some of them believe is inevitable bespeaks a dignity which makes you glad your shoulders are rubbing theirs. While looking for order on the same material plane as we do, and employing a predominantly intellectual rather than spiritual or emotional approach to the problem of reconciling man with his milieu, the English seem confident of the workings of ancient, fundamental spiritual values of Anglo-Saxon culture. Their intransigence in the face of

contemporary adverse conditions cannot be explained by facile statements of "stubbornness" or mental set, but must be dependent upon resources which are unavailable to a young country like ours.

The business men, both local and from the dominions, carry their "business man's" point of view right up to the planes of politics and morals and do not slither off into petty emotionalism or maudlin sophisms when addressing themselves to the problems of state and social equity. The heat and smoke of political debate and journalistic moralizing still finds the English business man imperturbably sticking to the semantics of more profits obtained under easier and safer conditions. The elimination of dif-

ferences which occur at the emotional level and are insoluble precludes the hopelessly pathological state of mind reminiscent of table-talk on the other fellow's religious or political "persuasion."

Like everybody else, my deepest interest is in the East-West struggle. I was listening to a successful Ceylonese business man who was explaining to me the great differences between the people of Ceylon and those of India. There is little similarity in the language, culture or politics. He said that he thought communism was inevitable in India (not Pakistan) and might occur within the next five years. He went on to predict that England and America would have to face alone the East, which would be entirely communistic. He said he thought we would eventually have to pour troops into the Japanese islands to protect our bastions there, as we would into Germany. All his arguments, which revolved around his interests as a

deeply committed business man, led to the conclusion that America should have fought a "preventive war" two years ago and eliminated the threat of Russia. Of course that is a familiar argument to us!

While the "alarums and excursions" of international affairs laces the talk and thoughts of people, the weather continues in bracing, delightful sunniness. If baneful fogs are near, there is no suspicion of them as yet, except in the early morning when a most Corot-like, discreet mist hovers over the Serpentine, and Hyde Park momentarily takes on the mystic aspect of a section of the Barbizon woods! It is lovely walking then, and when I emerge at Marble Arch I willingly contribute a penny (or ha'penny) to the box of a group of alleged war veterans who bravely salute the early arrivals from the nearby "tube" with accordion and trumpet blasting out a heavy cadenced march or an ancient popular tune.

Books & Bulletins

CONTEMPORARY LIGHTING IN MODERN AND TRADITIONAL INTERIORS. By Sub-Committee on Contemporary Lighting in Modern and Traditional Interiors, I.E.S. 58 pp. 8½" x 11½". New York: 1950: Illuminating Engineering Society. \$1.

An analysis of the ways in which interior lighting has been developed

in contemporary work, with photographic illustrations and diagrammatic details of the unusual light-source arrangements.

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Edited by Frank Harris and Weston Bonenberger. 100 pp. 6" x 9". Los

Angeles: 1951: Watling & Co.
\$1.95.

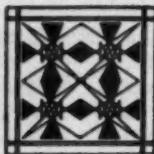
Under the editorship of Frank Harris and Weston Bonenberger, and with a foreword by Dean Gallion, this volume brings together the significant contemporary work in southern California in the categories of residential, commercial, public and landscape. As its title indicates, it is a checklist rather than a detailed exposition.

WESTERN RANCH HOUSES. By editorial staff of *Sunset* magazine in collaboration with Cliff May. 160 pp. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". San Francisco: 1946: Lane Publishing Company. \$3.

A successful attempt to focus the western ranch house into an easily recognized type. Profusely illustrated with plans and excellent reproductions of wash drawings showing general exteriors and details.

U. S. INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, 1951. By Society of Industrial Designers. 190 pp. 9" x 12". New York: 1951: Studio Publications Inc. and Thomas Y. Crowell Co. \$10.

The annual assembly of manifold objects coming under the hand of the industrial designer—everything from packaging of beer to a fabulously outfitted limousine.



The Editor's Asides

A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO there was loud bewailing of the fact that in all contemporary fiction the architect never achieved the role of hero. He wasn't even rated highly enough to be selected as the villain of the piece. Perhaps, we thought, the reading public didn't know what the word architect meant. Then along came Ayn Rand with "Fountainhead." It was some-

what like wishing for a glass of water and being deluged by a cloudburst—of rather muddy water at that. Today the architect seems better known as hero or villain or both. In a recent issue of *McCall's* there is "Unmarried Sister" by Thelma Strabel, and "She's Funny That Way" by Margaret Hammel. In *Good Housekeeping*, a serial is starting, "The

Years Between," by Rose Franken. We can't give you a resumé of any of these, as we haven't read them and do not expect to, but we are told they are about architects. Perhaps we are hearing the footfalls of Fame.

HENRY CHURCHILL, F.A.I.A., is currently stirred up over the fact that "Housing, using the word in the sense of shelter for family life, has not been subjected to rigorous analysis as to function and rational use in the same way that schools, hospitals and some industry have been subjected." He heads a committee of the New York Chapter to look into the matter and find out, among other things, what is making dwelling units smaller and smaller. Shall we save the committee time and effort by disclosing the answer?—money.

ADVERTISEMENTS OF MASTER BUILDERS, furniture makers and woodcarvers were common in the early days of this country along the eastern seaboard, but here is the bid of an architect in the *Arkansas Gazette* of October 22, 1844:

"R. Larrimore, architect and undertaker, offers his services to the people of Arkansas as being qualified for the discharge of his

duty in any of the five orders of architecture, either in the designs or construction of the work. He will give drawings and estimates of either brick or framed buildings at reasonable charges, such as will fit the times. Letters addressed to R. Larrimore, care of the editor of this paper, or the *Temperance Journal*, postpaid, will be punctually attended to."

SOME EIGHT YEARS AGO, in the JOURNAL's infancy, we made an impassioned plea for more of the local periodical recognition of meritorious achievement in architecture. When the architects of a community announce that in the past year the finest work in residential, institutional, commercial and industrial architecture has been done by such and such, your fellow citizens, that is front-page news. It is at least a debatable question whether such action, or a year's paid advertising by the chapter, is of greater benefit in the field of public relations. Local jealousies are perhaps the greatest stumbling-block, and thus the dog-eat-dog attitude continues to slow up public recognition of the architect's role in society. Yet slowly but surely the list of cities making use of public recognition is growing. Newark,

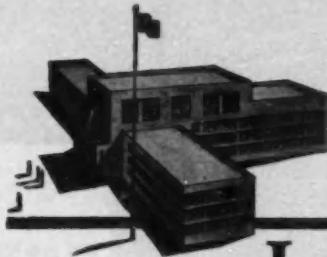
N. J., has a Merchants' Association which has just revived the practice, interrupted by the war, and has passed the baton over to the architects. The Institute's National Honor Awards system presupposes local or regional preliminary stages. Thus the framework is already erected; and, if you'll pardon my mixed metaphor, the bandwagon is approaching your corner.

PITY THE POOR HOMESEEKER in Italy. It is said that the best loan he can get is one-third of the purchase price, and on this ten-year loan he pays interest of 12% to 14%. Consequently he rents, since these rates are under government control. Sounds like the road France followed, with the disastrous result of having little or no new housing built.

IT ISN'T OFTEN, fortunately, that the JOURNAL makes two mistakes in one paragraph, par for the course being just half of that. We are reminded of what the late Fiorella LaGuardia told some of us at The Architectural League one evening. "I make very few mistakes," said the Mayor, "but when I do make one it is a *beaut!*" In

the October issue, under Honors, we credited Robert Moses with being Head of the New York City Planning Commission and also with election as an Honorary Associate Member of the New York Chapter, A.I.A. Mr. Moses has an arm-long list of honors of many varieties, but these two are not at the moment among them. The present Head of the Planning Commission is John J. Bennett, Mr. Moses having been appointed a member by two successive mayors. At a meeting of the New York Chapter the name of Mr. Moses was proposed for Honorary Associate Membership but the proposal lost by a small margin. Considering what Mr. Moses has, on occasion, called architects who disagreed with him, this is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that, in the course of improving his city as no one man has ever heretofore been able to do, Bob Moses has not left behind him a path of perfect sweetness and good will. Nevertheless, we venture the prediction that Honorary Associate Membership in the New York Chapter will one day be offered to Mr. Moses, and in the fervent hope that he will not turn it down.

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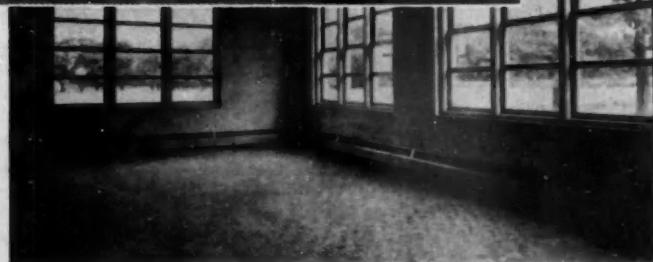
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Comfort was assured by spreading the heat the full length of the outside wall . . . no drafts . . . no hot spots . . . a minimum of covered exposed piping, evident in the class room view at the left below.

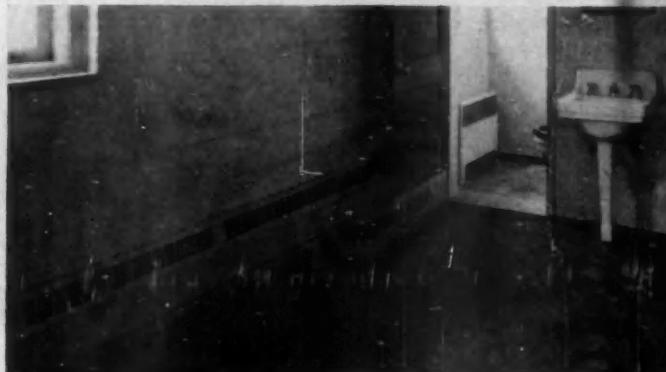
Minimum operating costs for the years to come were obtained by division of the installation into five zones and by using Webster-Nesbitt Unit Heaters with separate controls in the cafeteria-kitchen.

This installation has been through its first full heating season and has proved the soundness of the designers' conception. Webster Walvector has been installed in a long list of new school buildings. For information about Walvector and other Webster products for school heating, call the Webster Representative or write us. Address Dept. A.I.A.-11

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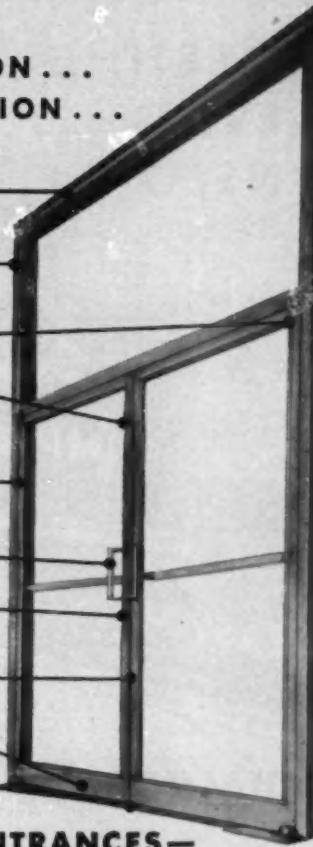
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